



Housing and Growth Committee

23 March 2023

Title	Housing Strategy
Report of	Chair of the Housing and Growth Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	Yes
Enclosures	Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Strategy Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Evidence Base
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Summary

The council has developed a new draft Housing Strategy to take account of changes in the housing sector and wider demographic and economic changes, including rising housing costs, a growing private rented sector, and legislative changes.

If approved by the Housing and Growth Committee, the council will undertake a public consultation on the aims of the draft strategy with key stakeholders including residents and interested third parties including local advocacy groups. Cabinet will then be asked to review the responses to the consultation and approve a final version of the Housing Strategy.

Officers Recommendations

1. Housing and Growth Committee considers and, subject to any changes, approves the proposed draft Housing Strategy at Appendix 1 for consultation.

2. Housing and Growth Committee notes that the results of the consultation be reported to Cabinet in the new municipal year together with officer recommendations and, if appropriate, a revised strategy.

3. Housing and Growth Committee notes the evidence base at Appendix 2.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Background

- 1.1 The council's Housing Strategy dates from 2015, and a number of changes have occurred since then which mean that the council's approach to housing needs to be reviewed and updated. These changes include:
- a change in the council's administration in May 2022; the administration's manifesto included a number of housing-related priorities, including those concerning the supply of affordable housing for rent and for ownership, sustainability, and private tenants' rights;
 - the release of the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020, which sets out central government's housing-related priorities;
 - the release of other White Papers that have an impact on housing-related priorities, including the Private Rented Sector White Paper (June 2022), Social Care White Paper (December 2021), and Levelling Up White Paper (February 2022);
 - new legislation including the Fire Safety Act 2021, the Building Safety Act 2022, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Renters Reform Bill, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, and the Social Housing Regulation Bill;
 - updates to key Barnet strategies, some of which are currently being reviewed following the change in administration, or new strategies in development including the Barnet Plan 2021-25, Growth Strategy 2020-30, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25, Cost of Living Strategy, Sustainability Strategy, and the Local Plan; and
 - the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing rise in cost of living.
- 1.2 Officers have updated the evidence base (Appendix 2) that supports the Housing Strategy. A new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has not been commissioned due to the timing of the release of the latest Census results; however, a review has been undertaken of the key population information changes. The most significant challenges facing the borough regarding the housing crisis include:
- Short supply of social housing in Barnet, which has the sixth smallest provision in London;
 - Increasing homelessness demand post-COVID 19 pandemic;
 - Ongoing contraction of the private rented sector due to challenges of affordability as well as increasing demands on private landlords impacting upon viability;
 - Lack of affordable housing creating tenancy sustainment challenges;
 - Benefit and welfare reforms impact on affordability;
 - Increasingly diverse and complex needs within the borough further exacerbating the lack of suitable housing supply;
 - Disproportionate impact of homelessness on some groups, including those from a Black / Black British background and those with a disability including mental ill health;

- Significant costs regarding council housing stock of retrofitting to meet sustainability goals, building and fire safety requirements and costs, and property condition including damp and mould challenges;
- Growing private rented sector, and increasing demands on landlords that could impact upon tenancy sustainability and/or ability to meet stretching standards.

1.3 In October 2022, the Housing and Growth Committee considered the above matters and instructed council officers to prepare a new draft Housing Strategy based on the following themes:

- **Prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers off the streets.** *[Note: to be articulated through the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy]*
- **Deliver the right homes in the right places.**
- **Ensure safe, sustainable council housing.**
- **Raise quality and standards in the private rented sector.**
- **Support living well by promoting healthy homes and wellbeing.**

1.4 Officers have now produced a draft Housing Strategy for the consideration of the Housing and Growth Committee. It is attached at Appendix 1.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The change in local administration, in addition to the changes in the operating and legislative environment set out in Section 1 of this report and the updated evidence base at Appendix 2, mean that the priorities in the Housing Strategy need to be reviewed and updated. The draft Housing Strategy has been drafted to support the delivery of the recently approved new Corporate Plan for Barnet, and forms a part of the wider transformation programme being delivered by the council.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 The Housing and Growth Committee has already instructed officers to draft a new Housing Strategy at the meeting in October 2022, so alternative options have not been considered further. Not preparing a new Housing Strategy was not recommended as the current strategy would not reflect the changes that have occurred since 2019 or the emerging priorities of the current administration.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The council will deliver a communications strategy to engage with and seek feedback on the draft strategy from residents and other stakeholders. An eight-week consultation period will take place during April and May 2023, following which the results will be analysed. Steps will be taken to maximise engagement by providing opportunities to engage online in response to a survey on the Engage Barnet platform, in addition to targeted engagement with representative groups to ensure the views of those who may be most vulnerable and least likely to otherwise participate in the consultation are heard. Options for face-to-face engagement are also currently being explored, with a preference for facilitated sessions to be added onto already planned events hosted by the council; opportunities for this are being reviewed.

4.2 The evidence base will be further updated to include 2022/23 year-end data, where relevant. The Housing Strategy will be revised, if appropriate, following the outcomes of

the consultation and will be presented to the Cabinet for consideration and approval in the new municipal year.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 The council's new draft Corporate Plan 2023-26 is centred around being a council that cares for people, our places, and the planet. The Housing Strategy will play a key role in helping to achieve the ambitions under the People priority to care for people by tackling inequalities, being family friendly, and living well. Under the Places priority it will help to achieve the ambitions to deliver quality, affordable homes. Under the Planet priority it will support our journey to net zero.

5.1.2 The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 sets out how the council and its partners will prevent homelessness, ensure a sufficient supply of accommodation, and provide support for people who are or have been homeless.

5.1.3 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 to 2025 recognises that the condition of and access to local housing has an important role in the quality of life and health of both individuals and communities.

5.1.4 The Growth Strategy 2020 to 2030 includes priorities to increase the supply of housing, deliver more homes that people can afford, deliver homes on public sector land, and support our growing older population.

5.1.5 Barnet's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment highlights the fact that there is a long-term shift in housing tenure towards renting and away from owner occupancy (either outright or with a mortgage), reflecting a sustained reduction in housing affordability and an imbalance between housing demand and supply.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 There is limited supply of social housing in Barnet. In 2021/22 there were over 2,100 homeless applications and only 625 social housing units available to let. The Housing Strategy aims to increase the supply of suitable affordable accommodation in Barnet for those in most housing need who cannot afford home ownership or high private sector rents, will support the council to work with partners to meet the housing and support needs of residents, and will promote the health and wellbeing of individuals and build sustainable, balanced, and cohesive communities.

5.2.2 Consultation on the draft Housing Strategy will be delivered through existing resources within the council and Barnet Homes. Additional support may be procured to support and facilitate any face-to-face engagement, which will be funded through existing budgets.

5.2.3 The costs of producing the final draft Housing Strategy will otherwise be met within existing resources through The Barnet Group's strategy function.

5.2.4 Following approval, the strategy will be delivered within the existing budgetary framework within the Housing Revenue Account, and from the budgets of key service areas as appropriate including Adult Social Care, Family Services, and Public Health. As options for

targeted service development and improvement are identified, these will be appraised and business cases will be managed to secure their delivery.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 Section 29 of the Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for English authorities to produce a housing strategy as previously required by section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003.

5.3.2 Where a Greater London authority has a local housing strategy, section 333D of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 provides that this should be in general conformity with the Mayor's London Housing Strategy.

5.3.3 The council's Constitution (Article 7 – Committees, Forums, Working Groups, and Partnerships) sets out the responsibilities of the Housing and Growth Committee which include:

- housing (including housing strategy, homelessness, social housing and housing grants, private sector housing and leasing, housing licencing and enforcement, HRA Revenue Account and Capital Programme).

5.4.1 Insight

5.4.1 The Housing Strategy has been informed by the evidence base which includes insight gained through the Healthy Workplan's Homelessness Prevention and Insight Project. The evidence base is attached to this report at Appendix 2, and will be updated as appropriate following year-end 2022/23.

5.5 Social Value

1.1.1 There are no specific social value aspects to this report; however, outcomes that are ultimately delivered through the new Housing Strategy will take into account the delivery of social value through any procurement that is undertaken. It should be noted that the strategy itself will additionally secure wider social, economic, and environmental benefits through delivery of its objectives.

5.6 Risk Management

5.6.1 There is a risk if the Housing Strategy is not updated that the current strategy does not reflect the significant contextual changes summarised at section 1.1 of this report, and that the housing requirements of the borough are not met.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision making of the council. This requires elected Members to satisfy themselves that equality considerations are integrated into day-to-day business and that all proposals emerging from the finance and business planning process have properly taken into consideration what impact, if any, there is on any protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place.

5.7.2 The Equality Act 2010, Section 149 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.7.3 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

5.7.4 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- c) Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

5.7.5 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken after consultation to assess the potential impacts of the Housing Strategy and prior to reporting back to the Cabinet. Equality impact will also be monitored post-implementation, as required.

5.8 Corporate Parenting

5.8.1 Council housing remains the most affordable housing option for care leavers, and therefore the Housing Strategy is expected to have a direct and positive impact on looked after children and care leavers, and to help ensure they have safe and appropriate accommodation to meet their needs, and access to suitable advice and information. This will include through the proposed themes of delivering the right homes in the right places, and supporting living well by promoting healthy homes and wellbeing.

5.8.2 The strategy will play a key part in helping the council to ensure it, as a corporate parent to all children in care and care leavers, has regard to the need to act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people, help them gain access to and make the best use of services provided, promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them, help ensure they are safe and have stability in their home lives, and prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

5.9.1 Small-scale early engagement has taken place on the Housing Strategy in January and February 2023 to seek the opinions of residents. This included delivering a briefing to the Voluntary and Community Environmental Network and seeking their feedback on three key questions, and engagement on the same questions with the Barnet Homes and Opendoor

Homes resident network.

5.9.2 Although the number of participants was relatively small (approximately 40 in total engaged), valuable feedback was provided that has both given some level of reassurance that the emerging themes agreed by the Housing and Growth Committee focused on the right issues for the residents of Barnet, and has ensured the detailed focus within the themes includes matters that are important to residents. The questions asked were:

1. What is important to you about where you live?
2. What do you believe is the biggest issue regarding housing in Barnet?
3. What would you most like or expect to see as a priority in Barnet's Housing Strategy?

5.9.3 For both groups, issues that were felt to be most important included green spaces, safety, and a friendly community. The biggest issue was overwhelmingly felt to be a lack of affordable housing in the borough. The most common suggestions of what residents would like to see in the strategy included building affordable housing, upgrading council stock to ensure it is warm and sustainable / retrofitting, supporting vulnerable residents, and helping homeless people.

5.9.4 Subject to approval by the Housing and Growth Committee, a wider public consultation will take place during April and May 2023. This will include an online survey and inviting comments from partner organisations and other stakeholders, as well as face-to-face engagement wherever it is possible to deliver this.

6. Environmental Impact

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from noting the recommendations. Implementing the recommendations in the report will lead to a neutral impact on the council's carbon and ecology impact. The draft strategy includes aims that support the delivery of the council's Sustainability Strategy and BarNET Zero campaign.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

5.10 Relevant previous decisions are listed in the table below:

Item	Decision	Link
Item 12, Housing and Growth Committee, 25 October 2022	Endorsement of the emerging themes for the Housing Strategy, and instruction to prepare an updated draft strategy for consideration by the Committee	https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s74637/Housing%20Strategy%20and%20Homelessness%20and%20Rough%20Sleeping%20Strategy%20-%20HG%20251022.pdf
Item 10, Housing and Growth Committee, 13 June 2022	Noted proposed timetable for the review of the Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=696&MId=11083&Ver=4

Item 8, Housing Committee, 1 April 2019	Approved Housing Strategy 2019-2024	https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&MId=9740&Ver=4
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